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# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2509

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February 17, 2023

The Honorable Gary Peters  
Chairman  
Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee  
340 Senate Dirksen Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Chairman Peters,

I write to request that you convene a hearing on federal disaster relief efforts to address transportation-related incidents taking place across the nation. As Members of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee (HSGAC), we have an obligation to conduct oversight over our federal disaster response, specifically as carried out by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). It is imperative that we conduct such oversight to study and investigate any potential shortcomings in our disaster response and preparedness, especially given the serious nature of these recent events.

As you may know, there has been significant attention and concern in recent weeks over multiple transportation-related incidents across the nation. Most notably, a train carrying highly toxic and combustible chemicals derailed in East Palestine, Ohio earlier this month, leading residents of that community to evacuate. Authorities have said that multiple chemicals are “known to have been and continue to be” released to the air, surface soil, and surface waters, and subsequent testing has revealed contamination in some Ohio River tributaries.<sup>1</sup> Yet FEMA has so far denied relief. Other recent incidents have prompted similar concerns, including train derailments near Houston, Texas and Detroit, Michigan, as well as a nitric acid spill near Tucson, Arizona.

Events like these threaten our critical infrastructure, disrupt our domestic supply chains, and uproot the lives of normal Americans. They also raise concerns over how the federal government responds to such incidents. The American people, not least the local residents of East Palestine and other affected communities, deserve to know how their federal government, including FEMA, is responding. If there are any gaps in our response efforts, it is the duty of this Committee to bring them to light.

Thank you for your attention and your consideration.

Sincerely,



Josh Hawley  
United States Senator

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/article/ohio-train-derailment.html>